United Nations A/68/257

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 August 2013

Original: English

Sixty-eighth session
Item 65 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The General Assembly, by its resolution 44/25, adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As at 1 July 2013, the Convention had been ratified or acceded to by 193 States. By its resolution 54/263, the Assembly adopted two Optional Protocols to the Convention. As at 1 July 2013, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict had been ratified by 151 States and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been ratified by 163 States. The third Optional Protocol to the Convention, adopted by the Assembly by its resolution 66/138, is awaiting entry into force. Pursuant to Assembly resolution 67/152, the focus of the present report is the implementation of the priority themes of the resolution entitled "Rights of the child" from its sixty-first to sixty-fifth sessions. This includes: progress that has been achieved and challenges that remain with regard to children and poverty; the elimination of violence against children; child labour; the right of the child to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting him or her; and the implementation of child rights in early childhood.

* A/68/150.

13-41688 (E) 280813

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 67/152, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session a comprehensive report containing information on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the implementation of the priority themes of the resolution entitled "Rights of the child" from its sixty-first to sixty-fifth sessions. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request.

II. Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

2. As at 1 July 2013, the Convention on the Rights of the Child[1] had been ratified or acceded to by 193 States, while 2 States had signed but not ratified the Convention.[2]

3. As at 1 July 2013, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict[3] had been ratified by 151 States and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography[4] had been ratified by 163 States.

4. In addition, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, adopted by the General Assembly by its resolution 66/138 of 19 December 2011 and opened for signature on 28 February 2012, had been ratified by 6 States as at 1 July 2013. It will enter into force three months after the deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession, in accordance with article 19 (1) of the Optional Protocol.[5]

III. Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

5. During the reporting period, the Committee on the Rights of the Child held its sixty-first to sixty-third sessions at the United Nations Office at Geneva, from 17 September to 5 October 2012, from 14 January to 1 February 2013 and from 27 May to 14 June 2013.

6. As of 1 July 2013, the Committee has received the initial reports of all but two States parties. All initial reports received by the Committee have been reviewed. In total, the Committee had received 583 reports pursuant to article 44 of the Convention.

7. Additionally, the Committee had received 99 reports and 1 second periodic report under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and 85 reports and 1 second periodic report under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.[6]

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[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

[2] See http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/.

[3] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2173, No. 27531.

[4] Ibid., vol. 2171, No. 27531.

[5] See http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/.

[6] See http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/sessions.htm.

8. The Chair of the Committee will present her oral report to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, addressing major issues related to the work of the Committee during the past year. In addition, the Chair will have the opportunity to engage in an interactive dialogue with the Assembly, in accordance with resolution 67/152.

IV. International efforts and national progress in tackling child poverty

A. Global commitments, progress and achievements

9. In its resolution 61/146, the General Assembly recognized that chronic poverty remained the single biggest obstacle to meeting the needs and protecting and promoting the rights of children. In addition to highlighting the unacceptable number of persons living in extreme poverty[7] and growing intra-country inequalities as two of the main development challenges, the Assembly recognized the complexities of addressing child poverty due to its multidimensional nature.

10. Poverty acutely affects the lives of children, threatening their survival, their development and their rights to health, adequate food and nutrition and education. It also has a negative impact on their rights to participation and to protection from violence, harm and exploitation. Global progress and key achievements regarding the main action points highlighted in resolution 61/146 are summarized below.

11. Preliminary estimates indicate that the percentage of persons living on less than $1.25 a day fell from 25.1 in 2005 to under 21 per cent in 2010.[8] Despite the general decline in poverty rates worldwide, much of the progress made continues to be driven by countries in East Asia. Globally, the percentage of the population with access to an improved water source increased from 76 to 89 per cent between 1990 and 2011.[9] However, significant rural/urban disparities persist and overall progress is likely overestimated, since the safety, reliability and sustainability dimensions are not reflected in the proxy indicator.[10] In terms of sanitation, between 1990 and 2011 the percentage of the population using improved facilities increased from 49 to 64 per cent.[9] Despite the advances, some 2.5 billion persons — including 43 per cent of the population in developing regions — still lack access to improved sanitation facilities, and open defecation remains a widespread health hazard in many countries, directly affecting children's health.

12. Between 2005 and 2011, significant progress was made in terms of child survival. Globally, under-5 mortality fell from 63 to 51 deaths per 1,000 live births, which represents an 18 per cent decline.[11] Much of this improvement can be attributed to expanded efforts against infectious diseases and conditions such as

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[7] Refers to average daily consumption of $1.25 or less.

[8] See S. Chen, and M. Ravallion, "An update to the World Bank's estimates of Consumption poverty in the developing world" (World Bank, 2012).

[9] See World Health Organization (WHO)/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water: 2013 Update*.

[10] See United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012*.

[11] See United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, *Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2012*.

pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria, meningitis, tetanus, HIV and measles, which account for almost two thirds of under-5 deaths.[12] Yet, nearly 7 million children under the age of 5 continue to die annually (or some 19,000 daily), mostly from preventable causes.[11]

13. Efforts to address malnutrition among children show modest progress. Overall, between 2005 and 2011, the prevalence of under-5 stunting decreased from 29.3 to 25.7 per cent. Similarly, the percentage of underweight children declined from 18.1 to 15.7 during the same period.[13] However, the improvement is likely overstated, since the estimates do not fully reflect the effects of the food-price spikes in 2007-2008 and 2011-2012 or the economic slowdown experienced by many countries since 2009. Furthermore, some 100 million under-5 children were underweight and 165 million were stunted in 2011, and therefore unable to realize their full socioeconomic and human potential. It is also important to recognize that malnutrition is an underlying cause of 45 per cent of all under-5 deaths (or more than 3.1 million annually).[14]

14. Most Governments have improved efforts to include child rights issues in their national development plans. The Millennium Development Goals agenda, the Paris Declaration and greater demand for civil society participation have helped in the prioritization of child rights, as evidenced in a review of poverty reduction strategy papers conducted since the adoption of resolution 61/146.[15] However, programmes need adequate resources and consistent funding flows to deliver and improve child rights outcomes as well as to better integrate child rights indicators into national planning and monitoring processes.[16]

15. There was a sharp shift from fiscal stimulus to fiscal austerity, with nearly 100 countries cutting their annual budgets by more than 2 per cent of gross domestic product, on average, during 2010-2012.[17] Despite shifts towards austerity, Governments increased proportionate spending to shield their populations from the initial impacts of the global economic crisis during 2008-2009, which included sizeable investments in social protection.

B. Remaining challenges

16. Structural inequalities continue to prevent greater progress in reducing child poverty, by perpetuating inequity in access to public services, including health care, education, employment, transportation and housing. Attention is needed to address gaps and inequities in legal and regulatory frameworks as well as the funding of public services. Discrimination on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, migrant or other status continues to contribute substantially to exclusion from the services and opportunities needed to break intergenerational cycles of poverty.

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[12] See UNICEF, *Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed — Progress Report 2012*.

[13] See *UNICEF-WHO-the World Bank: Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates — Levels and Trends* (2012).

[14] See *The Lancet*, Maternal and Child Nutrition Series (2013).

[15] See http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/prsp.aspx.

[16] See J. Espey, et al., "Improving the prominence of child rights in poverty reduction strategy processes" (Overseas Development Institute and UNICEF, 2010).

[17] See I. Ortiz and M. Cummins, "The age of austerity: A review of public expenditures and adjustment measures in 181 countries" (Initiative for Policy Dialogue and the South Centre, 2012).

17. Environmental volatility is becoming increasingly evident through shorter growing seasons and lower agricultural yields, changing disease patterns, growing water stresses and more frequent extreme weather events due to climate change.[18] These conditions most heavily affect children from the poorest families (up to 10 times more),[19] posing severe threats to child survival and well-being, food security and nutrition.

18. Together with economic factors, climate change contributes to fluctuations in commodity prices, with the most noticeable effects on food. Households in many developing countries were paying nearly twice as much for basic foodstuffs in 2012 than before the 2007-2008 price spike.[20] Given that international food prices were near historic highs in 2013, the threats of food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition are likely to remain severe for children in the foreseeable future.

19. Prolonged economic crises have translated into insufficient job opportunities, with two of every five potential workers in the world unable to find a job in 2012.[21] Labour markets are characterized by fewer, lower-paying jobs that are becoming more vulnerable, increasing the incidence of working poverty.[21]

20. It is well recognized that violent conflict exacerbates poverty, decreasing incomes and access to basic services.[22] Children in conflict-affected States are more than three times as likely as those living in other States to be unable to go to school, twice as likely to die before age 5[22] and more than twice as likely to lack clean water.[23] Eight of the 10 countries with the highest under-5 mortality rates are conflict-affected and/or fragile.[24] Children are the most vulnerable to a range of protection violations with long-term negative impacts on their mental health and well-being.

21. Lastly, development financing is also increasingly unpredictable. Investment shortfalls in both productive and social sectors are becoming commonplace in the worldwide drive towards austerity. It is projected that these forces will intensify in the coming years, with nearly 130 Governments expected to undergo budget cuts from 2013 to 2015.[17] Just as the general climate of austerity is adversely affecting the delivery of basic goods and services, traditional support for developing countries in dealing with these heightened risks provided in the form of official development assistance, will continue to be diminished.[25] There is growing concern that public spending in key areas that affect child well-being will be reduced and that the cost burden will further shift to households.

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[18] See Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, United Nations Environment Programme and World Meteorological Organization, *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation* (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2012).

[19] See Save the Children, "Poorest children hit worst by climate change", in *Save the Children News* (9 December 2010).

[20] See I. Ortiz, et al., "The food price Surge", in *A Recovery for All: Rethinking Socioeconomic Policies for Children and Poor Households* (UNICEF, 2012).

[21] See International Labour Organization (ILO), *Global Employment Trends 2013: Recovering from a Second Jobs Dip* (2013).

[22] See International Save the Children Alliance, *A Fair Chance at Life: Why Equity Matters for Child Mortality* (2010).

[23] See *World Development Report 2011*.

[24] See United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, *Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2011*.

[25] See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Development aid to developing countries falls because of global recession", in *OECD Newsroom* (4 April 2012).

C. Opportunities for engagement and the ways forward

22. The complex nature of child poverty has made it difficult to identify appropriate multidimensional indicators and formulate effective interventions. However, recently developed innovative tools and approaches hold the promise of achieving better results for children. Some of these include: multidimensional child poverty studies supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); multiple, overlapping deprivation analysis; child-responsive budgeting; and child-focused poverty and social impact analyses, to assist Governments in providing more child-sensitive investments in all sectors (e.g., from agriculture to infrastructure to education). In some regions, Governments have responded positively to child poverty challenges through social protection programmes. Momentum can be increased in these areas by strengthening the child sensitivity of interventions and building nationally defined social protection floors, where appropriate.

23. National Governments are encouraged to consider the following policy recommendations to ensure the well-being of the most marginalized sectors of populations, in particular children:

(a) To address structural inequalities, Governments should enhance investments in delivering more inclusive social services, such as those described in sections VIII and IX of the present report, and ensure that policies prevent and address discrimination against marginalized groups. Governments should take steps to enhance the voice of such groups, as well as their access to the full range of public services and opportunities;

(b) An employment-based recovery is vital to protecting and supporting the most vulnerable populations, including children. This requires a combination of macroeconomic and active labour market policies, along with adequate labour standards and social protection schemes;

(c) Policymakers should recognize the impacts that various austerity measures have on children and poor households, and ensure that budget cuts are designed to protect the most vulnerable. For example, wage bill decisions should protect staff in essential social services such as teachers and health-care professionals, especially in the most disadvantaged areas;

(d) Social protection measures can mitigate the adverse effects of various shocks to household income. These policies and programmes have the potential to facilitate asset-building and also contribute to investment in human capital, reducing vulnerability to future shocks. This makes the maintenance and expansion of a universal social protection floor a priority area;

(e) Governments should implement comprehensive emergency risk-informed plans that seek to systematically reduce vulnerability to natural disasters, conflicts and violence and help build resilience.

V. International efforts and national progress in addressing violence against children

A. Global commitments, progress and achievements

24. In its resolution 62/141, which included a focus on the elimination of all forms of violence against children and was built upon the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, the General Assembly urged Member States to address the underlying causes of such violence through a systematic, comprehensive and multifaceted approach. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on violence against children as a high-profile and independent global advocate to promote the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children.

25. The appointment of the Special Representative on Violence against Children has strengthened the Organization's capacity to raise awareness of and mobilize political and social support for children's protection from violence. To consolidate knowledge on this topic, the Special Representative organized eight thematic expert consultations, which helped to inform legislative reforms to ban all forms of violence against children, including harmful practices, and to establish child-sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms to address incidents of violence; to strengthen data and research to inform policy developments; and to enhance the protection of children from violence in early childhood, in schools and in the justice system.[26] In cooperation with regional organizations and institutions, the Special Representative organized six regional consultations. As a result, the number of countries with a national agenda addressing violence against children rose from 47 in 2006 to more than 80 by the end of 2012, and national surveys on violence against children increased. Furthermore, comprehensive legal prohibitions of violence were enacted in 34 countries, more than doubling their number compared with 2006. In 2012 the General Assembly, in resolution 67/152, recognized the progress achieved since the establishment of the mandate and recommended its extension for a further period of three years.

26. Since 2008, the international legal framework for the protection of children against violence has gained significant strength and recognition on the part of Member States.

27. In 2010, the Secretary-General launched a campaign to achieve universal ratification of the Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the involvement of children in armed conflict. The campaign was promoted by the Special Representatives on Violence against Children and for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Since the launch of the campaign, 26 additional States have ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, increasing the total number of ratifications to 163; and 19 States have ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, bringing the total number

[26] See A/HRC/22/55.

of ratifications to 151.[27] The protection of children's rights was further strengthened with the adoption of the third Optional Protocol.

28. Renewed commitment to addressing sexual violence and abuse has been demonstrated through international and regional mechanisms such as the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the European Union Directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography. These efforts have been echoed in the Bridgetown Declaration and Agenda for Action to Combat Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean and the Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents,[28] which provides a global framework for action.

29. Moreover, there have been a number of global initiatives to raise awareness regarding the issue of violence, such as the Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women. The campaign, launched in 2008, calls on all Governments and key actors to promote the adoption and implementation of legal and policy frameworks, and the establishment of data collection and monitoring systems to address the issue of violence.[29] In a similar effort, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted the agreed conclusions of its fifty-seventh session, in March 2013, on the elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls.

30. Reports from Member States indicate increased efforts to develop and implement comprehensive rights-based child protection laws and intersectoral strategies that target both the prevention of and response to violence. Two recent international conferences held in 2012, "Strengthening child protection systems in Africa: promising practices, lessons learned and the way forward", in Dakar,[30] and "A better way to protect all children: the theory and practice of child protection systems", hosted by UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Save the Children and World Vision in New Delhi, contributed to further understanding of systemic approaches to address violence.

31. Achievements are noted in the increased efforts being made to prevent violence. The number of countries that have achieved the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools rose from 109 in 2010[31] to 117 in 2012.[32] Similarly, the majority of States have prohibited corporal punishment in settings in penal institutions (121 countries) and as a sentence of the courts (157 countries).[32] Additionally, Member States reported on the implementation of programmes and services focusing on positive child development and child discipline, parenting skills and the prevention of violence within the school environment.[33]

32. The progress made in the area of addressing harmful practices was reflected in the first-ever General Assembly resolution on female genital mutilation, resolution

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[27] See http://treaties.un.org/Pages/Treaties.aspx?id=4&subid=A&lang=en.

[28] Adopted at the Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 25 to 28 November 2008.

[29] See http://endviolence.un.org/.

[30] See http://wiki.childprotectionforum.org/Welcome.

[31] See A/65/206.

[32] See Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, *Ending Legalized Violence against Children: Global Report 2012*.

[33] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Stopping Violence in Schools: A Guide for Teachers* (2011).

67/146, adopted in 2012. Through the United Nations Population Fund-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, aimed at accelerating the abandonment of the practice, more than 10,000 communities in West, East and North Africa have declared their commitment to ending it. Putting an end to child marriage has also drawn increased attention from individual Governments as well as at the global level, with the first-ever International Day of the Girl Child celebrated on 11 October 2012.

33. With regard to humanitarian issues, the positive experience of conflict-affected countries in monitoring, reporting and preventing grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict was documented in the global study of good practices in the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, conducted by UNICEF, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, developed in 2012, are an effective tool for Governments, providing guidance on designing adequate child protection strategies and mainstreaming child protection into other sectors.

B. Remaining challenges

34. Progress made in ending all forms of violence against children remains uneven, with uncoordinated policy interventions, dispersed and ill-enforced legislation and scarce data and research to address the invisibility and social acceptance of violence.

35. Scalable evidence-based programmes are emerging both nationally and regionally. However, this area of work is often related to hard-to-reach children and clandestine violations, which can make it difficult to develop practical and useful indicators and data collection mechanisms. It is also challenging to collect valid and reliable data on sensitive issues in a way that is ethical and efficient.

36. While large-scale household surveys are important sources of data on child protection, they are limited in terms of providing information on children living outside households, such as street children and children living in institutions. Data gained through routine administrative records, qualitative studies and ad hoc surveys are needed to fill critical data gaps.[34]

C. Opportunities for engagement and the ways forward

37. Sustaining the progress achieved so far, and addressing remaining challenges to ensure the effective protection of children against violence, require concerted action on the part of Governments and key stakeholders with a view to:

(a) Enacting and implementing national legislation and mechanisms in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto and moving towards the universal ratification of these legal instruments;

(b) Further advancing the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children;

[34] See UNICEF, "Global monitoring for child protection" (2011).

(c) Supporting the implementation of the Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, by taking action at the regional and national levels;

(d) Increasing investments in programmes that address violence, abuse and exploitation through multi-country and multi-partner initiatives that promote the cross-fertilization of knowledge and practice;

(e) Developing and implementing well-resourced, multisectoral approaches to the protection of children against violence, taking into account the importance of identifying social determinants of violence, including harmful social norms;

(f) Strengthening the capacity of the child protection sector to monitor and evaluate strategies and programmes addressing the issue of violence and to build an evidence base of "what works" to inform future policy and practice;

(g) Advocating the protection of children against violence, at the global, regional and national levels, including in collaboration with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and with a view to ensuring that the protection of children against violence takes centre stage in the process leading to the post-2015 development agenda.

VI. International efforts and national progress in addressing child labour with special emphasis on its causes, including poverty and lack of education

A. Global commitments, progress and achievements

38. General Assembly resolution 63/241 and a follow-up report submitted by the Secretary-General to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session (A/64/172), which were focused on international efforts to address child labour and actions to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016, emphasized the role of education and social protection in this regard. This section of the present report reviews progress made since and outlines directions for the future.

39. UNICEF estimates that some 150 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 (or nearly 1 in 6 children in that age group), are involved in child labour.[35] In 2010, ILO reported a decline in child labour in the Asia-Pacific region and in Latin America and the Caribbean.[36] However, the decrease was at a slower rate, especially in hazardous work. The report also noted an increase in child labour in sub-Saharan Africa. This poses a challenge to achieving the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016. Most child labourers continue to work in agriculture and only one in five working children is in paid employment.[36]

40. The foundations of the regulatory framework for the elimination of child labour rest on legally binding law instruments, including ILO Convention No. 138, on the minimum age for admission to employment; ILO Convention No. 182, on the worst forms of child labour; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the

[35] See http://www.childinfo.org/labour.html.

[36] See ILO, *Accelerating Action against Child Labour: Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 2010*.

Optional Protocols thereto. There has been steady movement over the years on the part of Governments towards adherence to these instruments. Since July 2009, there has been an increase in ratifications of ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182, with current totals of 165 and 177 signatory parties, respectively.[36]

41. A major milestone achieved within the international legal framework for the protection of children was the adoption of ILO Convention No. 189, on decent work for domestic workers, and the accompanying recommendation No. 201 at the 100th session of the International Labour Conference, held in June 2011. A 2013 ILO report estimated that at least 15.5 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 were engaged in domestic work, of whom some 3.5 million were between 5 and 11 years old and some 3.8 million between 12 and 14 years old. Girls far outnumber boys in domestic work, which further limits their opportunities to attend school and escape poverty. The tendency becomes stronger for the 15-17 age group, in which 12.2 per cent of girls in employment are engaged in domestic work, compared with only 2.2 per cent of boys.[37]

42. Within just over a year after its adoption, Mauritius, the Philippines and Uruguay have ratified the Convention, which will enter into force in September 2013. At least 20 other countries have initiated ratification procedures.[37] The adoption of the Convention has drawn significant attention to often invisible domestic child labour and provided Governments with a framework for action, including the development of policies and programmes to address the issue at the national level.

43. In addition, Member States made commitments towards the elimination of child labour at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, held in September 2010. The outcome document, entitled "Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals" (resolution 65/1), called upon Governments to take appropriate steps to assist one another in the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by strengthening child protection systems and combating trafficking in children.

44. This important recognition by the General Assembly reinforces the commitment previously expressed at the Hague Global Child Labour Conference, held in May 2010. The Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016, adopted at the Conference, called for preventive and time-bound measures, together with adequate resources for the elimination of all forms of child labour. As a follow-up, in October 2013 the Government of Brazil will host the third global conference related to the issue, at which strategies for accelerating the pace of eradication of the worst forms of child labour will be discussed.

45. The role of education in the prevention and elimination of child labour was highlighted through recent global efforts such as the Global Education First Initiative,[38] launched in 2012 by the Secretary-General; the Education for All initiative; and the report *Child Labour and Educational Disadvantage: Breaking the Link, Building Opportunity*, issued by the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education.

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[37] See ILO, *Domestic Workers across the World: Global and Regional Statistics and the Extern of Legal Protection* (2013).

[38] See http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/.

B. Remaining challenges

46. Collecting reliable data on child labour is a crucial step in the process of eliminating the phenomenon. Accurate estimates build a strong foundation for policy and programme development and are essential to monitoring progress and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions. ILO and UNICEF support the collection of data on the extent, characteristics and determinants of child labour through, respectively, the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour and the multiple indicator cluster survey. Established in 1998 by ILO, the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour has supported more than 300 child labour surveys, 66 of which have been national in scope.[36] As of April 2013, UNICEF had supported the collection of nationally representative data on child labour through more than 250 surveys conducted under the Programme since 2000.

47. In spite of repeated recognition of the need to establish an internationally agreed statistical definition of child labour, a consensus in that regard has yet to be achieved. Variations in child labour estimates identified through the research conducted under the inter-agency cooperation programme Understanding Children's Work highlight the need for an established definition.[39]

C. Opportunities for engagement and the ways forward

48. Despite the increased international attention drawn to child labour through global advocacy, legal reforms, global monitoring and data collection mechanisms, millions of children continue to be exposed to harmful and exploitative practices. Governments and key stakeholders are encouraged to continue to apply efforts towards:

(a) Adhering to ILO Conventions Nos. 138, 182 and 189 and, within that framework, developing and implementing legislation, programmes and services for the protection of children against child labour, including its worst forms;

(b) Addressing the issue of child labour as a means of achieving Millennium Development Goal 1, on poverty eradication, as stated in the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals; and ensuring that the elimination of child labour continues to take centre stage among the discussions concerning the post-2015 development agenda;

(c) Strengthening national data collection systems on child labour and harmonizing data collection instruments with international standards and definitions, as well as recognizing and accounting for hazardous unpaid household services as a form of child labour.

[39] See UNICEF, ILO and the World Bank, "Towards consistency in child labour measurement: assessing the comparability of estimates guaranteed by different survey instruments" (2010).

VII. International efforts and national progress in supporting the right of the child to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting him or her

A. Global commitments, progress and remaining challenges

49. In its resolution 64/146, the General Assembly highlighted the importance of literacy and universal access to free and compulsory primary education as key elements in promoting the right of the child to be heard. It called upon States to establish and strengthen mechanisms that promote the involvement and participation of children in the formulation and implementation of public policies while ensuring the equal participation of girls. This section of the present report outlines further advancements in that regard.

50. When equipped with the right tools, children and adolescents come up with creative solutions to the challenges they face. In Kosovo, "Prishtina Buses" is a youth-led civic engagement project aimed at reducing urban air pollution. In Uganda, Ureport uses text messages to collect and share information on topics of importance to children and youth, such as gender-based violence, child marriage, water access and inflation. As this latter example demonstrates, there have been exciting developments in mobile-phone technology and social media. However, it is critical to recognize that offline engagement is equally important so that those who are not connected are not excluded. Looking forward, localized approaches that involve parents, teachers and community members are needed to ensure meaningful participation and empower youth as agents of change.

51. Despite these achievements, in most societies the implementation of the right of the child to express her or his views continues to be challenged by cultural attitudes as well as political and economic barriers. The Committee on the Rights of the Child noted, in its general comment No. 12, that younger children and children belonging to vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged groups face particular barriers in the realization of this right.

52. A number of States parties have made efforts to incorporate the right of children to be heard into administrative and legal proceedings. However, insufficient clarity and limited practical application of legal provisions, including safeguards and mechanisms for ensuring children's right to be heard free of discrimination, manipulation or intimidation remain issues of concern.[40] In many cases, the special linguistic requirements of children, including indigenous children, are not being adequately taken into account in judicial and administrative decision-making.[41]

53. Increasingly, the establishment of national or subnational children's and youth councils or parliaments reflects the intention of States parties to strengthen the participation of children in matters that affect them. However, limited efforts to measure the effectiveness and impact of such platforms raise the concern that they run the risk of remaining symbolic and ineffective.[42]

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[40] According to an analysis of the concluding observations contained in 41 reports considered by the Committee on the Rights of the Child during its fifty-fourth to fifty-ninth sessions.

[41] See A/67/225.

[42] See A/HRC/22/55.

54. Enabling children to understand their rights and to be active decision makers requires new and adapted pedagogies. ASPnet in Action, an online collaborative platform launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in March 2013, will help to advance these efforts. The platform facilitates the global exchange of experiences, materials and information on school-based initiatives. Similarly, a forthcoming UNESCO publication, *Children and Youth as Educators: Pedagogy for the Child as Global Citizen*, will provide guidance on ways in which to empower children to take an active role in society.

55. Limited access to information, especially on reproductive health, prevents children and adolescents from making informed decisions affecting their lives. In low- and middle-income countries, complications of pregnancy continue to be the leading cause of mortality among adolescent girls who, whether married or unmarried, receive insufficient information and support on matters related to their own health.[43] Decisions about medical interventions are frequently made without the involvement or consent of children, particularly children with disabilities.[44]

B. Opportunities for engagement and the ways forward

56. The introduction of the following special measures and actions can further strengthen the active participation of children and adolescents and help to include their voices in the consideration of the matters affecting them:

(a) Promote awareness-raising and educational activities, including campaigns targeting the public at large and specific groups of professionals, to create better understanding of the right of the child to express his or her views freely;

(b) Promote the right of all children to express their views in decision-making affecting them, and put into place safeguards and mechanisms for ensuring the right to be heard free of discrimination, manipulation or intimidation;

(c) Because children and adolescents cannot exercise their rights unless they have access to information in a form they can understand, ensure the right to information and involvement of children, including children with disabilities, in decisions related to health interventions and sexual reproductive health;

(d) Pay particular attention to, respect and protect the child's civil rights and freedoms in national legislation, policies and programmes (articles 7, 8, 13-17, 19 and 37 (a) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

VIII. Implementing child rights in early childhood

57. The report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session (A/65/206) identified the period below the age of 8 years as critical for a child's development in that it includes crucial processes that play a vital role by influencing a range of social, economic and health outcomes throughout life. The report underlined the significance of the cost-effectiveness of early childhood interventions, as they yield more positive long-term outcomes for individuals and society than later interventions. In its subsequent resolution 65/197, adopted in

[43] See E/CN.9/2012/5.

[44] See A/66/230.

March 2011, the General Assembly emphasized good maternal health, nutrition and education as essential elements for the full realization of all rights of the child, and called upon Member States to ensure universal access to quality and affordable health, education, water and sanitation, social protection and welfare services. Progress made towards the fulfilment of child rights in early childhood and remaining challenges are outlined below.

A. Global commitments, progress and achievements

58. In accordance with article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children should be registered immediately after birth. A birth certificate protects children from being trafficked or illegally recruited by armed forces or armed groups (articles 35 and 38) and from hazardous forms of work and from being sexually exploited (articles 32 and 34). Children in conflict with the law need an official record of their age to avoid being treated as adults by the criminal justice system (general comment No. 10).

59. Birth registration should be free and universal. Yet, the current data show that only half of children under the age of 5 in the world are registered.[45] According to UNICEF, nearly 25 million children under 5 in the developing world (excluding China) are not registered. Estimates show large regional disparities, with only slightly more than one third of children in Eastern and Southern Africa and South Asia registered.[46] Birth registration rates are lower in rural than in urban areas and among the poorest 20 per cent of households, across all regions. Other marginalized groups, including indigenous children, also have low registration rates.[47]

60. Innovative technology has proved to be an effective, low-cost option for raising registration rates. In India, New Delhi has achieved universal birth registration of children by combining online registration of births and deaths since 2004 and by linking immunization to birth registration.[48] In Brazil, subnational birth registration rates in northern states have increased owing to the adoption of a comprehensive national plan of action, which stipulated the provision of a monetary incentive to maternity wards for each registered child.

61. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to grow up in a family environment. When, despite receiving assistance to help bring up a child, the child's family is unavailable, unable or unwilling to care for her or him, appropriate and stable family-based solutions should be sought to enable the child to grow up in a caring and supportive environment. Still today, at least 2 million children are institutionalized, with increasing use of orphanages and other institutional care.[49]

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[45] See http://www.childinfo.org/birth_registration_progress.html.

[46] UNICEF global databases, 2013. Information is based on data from demographic and health surveys, multiple indicator cluster surveys, and other national surveys conducted between 2005 and 2011. Estimates are based on a subset of 104 countries covering 77 per cent of the under-5 population in the world (excluding China, for which comparable data are not available). Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population.

[47] See UNICEF, *Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity* (No. 9, 2010).

[48] See M. Muzzi, "UNICEF good practices in integrating birth registration into health systems (2000-2009)" (2010).

[49] See UNICEF, *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Child Protection* (No. 8, 2009).

62. Following the launch in November 2009 of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex), work is continuing to implement the guidelines in legislation, policy and practice. In Mexico, more than 1,000 staff were trained on the application of the Guidelines, while the child protection system in Indonesia is increasingly moving towards the prevention of admission to alternative care settings.

63. The Guidelines lay out recommendations both for the prevention of family separation, so that it occurs only when it is necessary, and for the provision of appropriate alternative care, according to the needs of the individual child. To enable Governments to better implement the Guidelines, the handbook *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'*,[50] has been produced in English, Spanish and French. Child-friendly and staff-friendly versions of the Guidelines have also been produced in English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

B. Remaining challenges

64. Overall progress in the area of early childhood development is constrained owing to the following factors: living in stressful ecosystems (i.e., unemployment, social exclusion and contaminated environments); insufficient knowledge among caregivers regarding how to care for young children; limited access to early childhood development, health and protection services for young children affected by significant disparities driven by such factors as poverty and ethnicity; fragmented policies that do not address the needs of young children holistically; and insufficient budget allocations by national Governments.

65. Poverty associated with health, nutrition and social risk factors prevent at least 200 million children in developing countries from attaining their full developmental potential.[51] Poor health status of young children, especially high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and malaria, together with nutritional deficiencies such as growth retardation and iron and iodine deficiencies are among the immediate causes of poor outcomes in early childhood.

66. Combating the unnecessary deaths of women and children continues to be a pressing challenge. Rates of maternal and neonatal mortality, as well as stunting, show less reduction than under-5 mortality rates, especially in countries affected by conflict and fragile situations, and those with exacerbated inequalities.

67. Persistent challenges in coordination across sectors and systems relevant to young children and their families require further scrutiny. In particular, ways to promote better understanding of the linkages between health and nutrition interventions, as well as nexuses with agriculture, food security, social protection and public health, should be considered.

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[50] N. Cantwell et al., *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'* (Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland, 2012).

[51] See S. Walker et al., "Child development: risk factors for adverse outcomes in developing countries", in *The Lancet*, vol. 369, issue 9556 (2007).

C. Opportunities for engagement and the ways forward

68. The following promising initiatives promote the active engagement of Governments and the private sector and must be prioritized for full achievement of the Millennium Development Goals:

(a) While the achievement of Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 by 2015 will remain an unattainable objective for many countries, the goal of ending all preventable child deaths is now within reach. In June 2012, the Governments of Ethiopia, India and the United States of America, together with UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), launched "A Promise Renewed", a commitment to reducing under-5 mortality to 20 or fewer deaths per 1,000 live births in all countries in the world by 2035.[52] By December 2012, 168 countries had signed a pledge to support this effort;

(b) Increasing evidence showing the impact of undernutrition on infant and child mortality, and its largely irreversible long-term effects on health, cognitive and physical development, has propelled the issue higher on the development agenda. Nutrition is commanding the attention not only of the research community, but also of donors and developing countries, through the Scaling Up Nutrition movement, which supports nationally driven processes for the reduction of stunting and other forms of malnutrition.[53] This global initiative promotes the implementation of evidence-based nutrition interventions and focuses on the integration of nutrition goals across health, social protection and agriculture sectors. As of May 2013, 16 Scaling Up Nutrition country plans had been analysed to better inform national planning and investment priorities and to help mobilize additional resources.[54]

IX. Concluding observations and recommendations

69. **Scientific knowledge and understanding about what it takes to end child poverty, support a healthy start in life, eliminate child labour and prevent violence have made significant strides over the past decade. The improved knowledge base has resulted in shifts in the responses and enhanced advocacy efforts for poverty reduction and social and economic development. While progress has been made, as the examples set out above demonstrate, sustained efforts are needed on behalf of children and women. As the world continues to articulate the post-2015 development agenda, national Governments and international actors are encouraged to consider the following principles and actions to further advance and fulfil commitments on the rights of all children.**

Maintain attention to "unfinished business", together with emerging and neglected issues, to ensure the fulfilment of children's rights

70. **Ending preventable child and maternal deaths remains an imperative and requires concerted action by Governments, development agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society. It must be recognized that children's rights extend beyond mere survival and that the unfinished agenda**

[52] See http://www.apromiserenewed.org/A_Call_to_Action.html.

[53] See http://scalingupnutrition.org/.

[54] See http://scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Executive-Summary_SUN-Country-Costing-Analysis_May-2013.pdf.

encompasses a broad set of goals related to improved access to quality education, water and sanitation, nutrition and child protection services. Accelerating efforts such as "A Promise Renewed", the Secretary-General's "Every Woman, Every Child" movement, the Getting to Zero strategy of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative are central to achieving this.

Integrate equity into national development strategies and international development goals

71. **With growing inequalities widely spread across almost all countries around the globe, tens of millions, including children, continue to be marginalized, excluded and exploited. In least developed, middle-income and high-income countries alike, certain groups are facing persistent high mortality rates, poor educational outcomes and grave risks of violence. Evidence shows that failure to address inequities severely compromises countries' economic and social stability over time.**

72. **A growing body of evidence suggests that prioritizing the most disadvantaged communities is the most efficient and cost-effective way to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for children.[55] In addressing the rights and empowerment of the most marginalized, it is important to recognize both the range of intersecting discriminations and the social, economic and environmental barriers they face. A heightened focus on addressing disparities will require the disaggregation of data at subnational levels, the strengthening of countries' capacity to conduct this analysis and the empowerment of communities to monitor progress and hold authorities and service providers accountable for their performance.**

73. **At the same time, it is important to recognize that equitable, continuous and broad-based investments can level the playing field by providing every child with the same opportunities to develop. The most cost-effective investments encompass a range of early childhood interventions in nutrition, immunization, malaria and deworming.[56] Investments in preschool education can also lead to significant returns.[57] Investments in education, particularly for girls, have shown strong correlation with reduced child mortality.**

74. **Avoiding or deferring investments in children, especially the most marginalized, can perpetuate the intergenerational transmission of poverty and lead to irreversible, negative impacts on their health and educational attainment.[58] Multilateral coordinated effort and policy coherence at the global and national levels is imperative to ensure sustained and timely investments in children.**

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[55] See A. Lake, "A tipping point for child survival, health and nutrition", in *The Lancet*, vol. 380, issue 9850 (2012).

[56] See Copenhagen Consensus 2012: *Expert Panel Findings*. See also UNICEF, "A post-2015 world fit for children: sustainable development starts and ends with safe, healthy and well-educated children" (2013).

[57] See P. Engle et al., "Strategies for reducing inequalities and improving developmental outcomes for young children in low-income and middle-income countries", in *The Lancet*, vol. 378, issue 9799 (2011).

[58] S. Naudeau et al., *Investing in Young Children: An Early Childhood Development Guide for Policy Dialogue and Project Preparation* (2011).

Focus on integrated solutions to deliver results for children

75. **Addressing the greatest challenges for children requires the articulation of synergies between inclusive economic growth, inclusive social and human development and environmental sustainability. This may take the form of heightened attention focused on concerted intersectoral action to ensure that integrated solutions — policies and investments in one domain — simultaneously benefit the outcomes in other domains.**[59]

Strengthen accountability mechanisms

76. **Making further progress on commitments for children requires the strengthening of existing accountability mechanisms and the establishment of new ones. Effective approaches emphasize the use of participatory processes to engage community representatives and members — girls, boys, men and women, especially those from marginalized and excluded groups — in research on and the design, development and evaluation of services and programmes that impact their lives. Local development scorecards, crowdsourcing, the transparency of municipal budgets and SMS feedback on service delivery all provide examples of how to monitor progress and performance. Other promising initiatives such as the accountability framework of the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health,[60] Countdown to 2015[61] and the Public Library of Science Collection entitled "Measuring Coverage in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health"[62] can further help to strengthen the oversight of health-related institutions at the global, national and local levels, including the delivery of services.**

Recognize the right of children to be active participants in their own development

77. **Children and adolescents have helped solve problems across the world. Their engagement spans a gamut of activities, from raising awareness on specific issues to taking part in local government decisions and contributing to commercial and public products and services. To sustain such achievements, it is necessary to provide adequate financial and human resources to established mechanisms for children's participation at the national and subnational levels, such as children's and youth clubs, councils, parliaments or advisory boards, to ensure that they are effective, regular and systematic. In parallel, Member States should maintain efforts to monitor and measure the extent to which these mechanisms inform public policies and programmes. Formal and independent mechanisms of redress are essential to the exercise of the right of the child to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting him or her. To that end, the creation of independent human rights institutions for children at the national and regional levels will allow for the establishment of official review and complaint mechanisms for children.**

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[59] See "Towards a post-2015 world fit for children: UNICEF's key messages on the post-2015 development agenda" (2012).

[60] See http://www.who.int/woman_child_accountability/about/en/.

[61] See http://www.countdown2015mnch.org/.

[62] See http://www.ploscollections.org/article/browseIssue.action?issue=info:doi/10.1371/issue.pcol.v01.i16.